

Drowning in money

Level 1 | Elementary

1 Internet domain names

The two letters at the end of an internet address often show the name of the country where the domain name is registered. Match the letters with the countries:

Tuvalu
France

South Africa
Japan

United Kingdom
Argentina

Germany
China

1. uk
2. ar
3. tv
4. za
5. jp
6. cn
7. fr
8. de

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible:

1. Where is Tuvalu?
2. How many people live in Tuvalu?
3. How much money did the Tuvalans earn in 1999?
4. What is the internet domain name for Tuvalu?
5. How much did the Tuvalans receive when they sold the domain name?
6. How high is Tuvalu above sea level?
7. How much did the Tuvalans spend on new roads?
8. How many cars were there on the islands before 1999?

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Daphna Baram

Tuvalu is a tiny country of nine islands in the South Pacific. It has a population of just 11,000. In 1999 it was the third-poorest country in the world. The islanders earned just \$1,000 each a year. But then something unusual happened. Tuvalu received an internet domain name - the letters ".tv". These letters were very interesting for many companies around the world.

A communication company from California offered to buy the domain name ".tv" for \$40m. For the Tuvalans this was a very large amount of money. The islanders became very rich.

At the same time the islanders received some very bad news. Because of global warming, and because the islands are only 3m above sea level, Tuvalu will probably become the first country in the world that will disappear under the sea. Scientists say that there will be very bad floods during the next 15-20 years and by the end of the century the Tuvalu islands will already be under the sea.

You can already see signs of the rising sea on Tuvalu. There are pools of seawater on the land, some

beaches are disappearing and you can see tree roots by the ocean. Cyclones used to be very rare but they now appear a few times a year, and the rains that come with the cyclones cause flooding.

But despite these problems, the Tuvalans had their new money. They could use it to buy themselves a future. Or at least they could use it to buy some time. Paul Lindsay, a documentary film-maker, took these questions with him all the way to Tuvalu, and came back with an incredible story. As the water rises, the Tuvalans are using the money to develop the land. They are building new houses, planning nightclubs, restaurants and hotels and new cars are driving around on new roads. The residents do not think this is strange: "Just because we are sinking, it doesn't mean we don't want to raise our standards of living," Sam Teo, Tuvalu's minister for natural resources, told Lindsay.

Tuvalu received \$40 million for the internet deal and used \$10m of it to asphalt the islands' 19km of roads. Before 1999 there were four cars on the islands. The Tuvalans used to walk or cycle everywhere. As well as new cars, the Tuvalans also imported a lot of food and other goods. Now they drive everywhere and eat more food than before.

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Now many Tuvalans are fat and suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes.

Other Tuvalans discovered that it was too expensive for them to keep their cars, and that anyway cars are not really necessary in a country that is just 26 sq km in area. There is now a huge rubbish dump in the middle of this tropical paradise, full of old cars and other waste.

The Tuvalans also spent large amounts of money telling the world about their situation. Tuvalu joined the United Nations, at a cost of \$1.5m a year. The Tuvalan delegation at the United Nations was especially active in supporting the Kyoto protocol to fight global warming. But while the political system argues about global warming, the sea keeps rising, and the Tuvalans keep spending their dollars.

All Tuvalans know that they will probably not die of old age on their islands. The solution to the problem is not so simple, however. They cannot move to the nearby island of Kioa, because it will not take any more immigrants. Australia doesn't want to let the Tuvalans in, and New Zealand will only take a small number each year. When the islands are finally covered in water, the Tuvalan nation will probably be split up.

After the eight months he spent in Tuvalu, Lindsay is not sentimental about white sands and turquoise waters. "There are no more paradises. Tuvalu is trying to keep its sense of social solidarity in the face of progress. Nowadays even paradise has a price".

The Guardian Weekly 25-03-2005,
page 18

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3 Comprehension check

Match the beginnings with the endings:

1. Before 1999 ...
 2. The Tuvalans became rich ...
 3. The biggest problem for the Tuvalans ...
 4. By the end of the century ...
 5. The Tuvalans are spending their money ...
 6. It costs Tuvalu \$1.5 million a year ...
 7. The total area of Tuvalu ...
 8. When the sea rises ...
-
- a. ... is global warming.
 - b. ... on roads, cars and new buildings.
 - c. ... is just 26 square kilometres.
 - d. ... Tuvalu was the third-poorest country in the world.
 - e. ... the sea will cover the islands completely.
 - f. ... the Tuvalans will have to leave their islands.
 - g. ... to be a member of the United Nations.
 - h. ... when they sold their internet domain name.

4 Vocabulary - adjectives

Find the words that mean ...

1. very, very small
2. very large
3. unusual
4. unbelievable
5. the opposite of 'passive'
6. the opposite of 'common'
7. the opposite of 'poor'
8. easy

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5 Vocabulary - words and definitions

Match the words with the definitions

1. diabetes
 2. flood
 3. cyclone
 4. rubbish dump
 5. immigrant
 6. turquoise
-
- a. a very powerful tropical storm
 - b. a person arriving from another country to live in a new country
 - c. a disease in which the body cannot process sugar
 - d. a colour that is between green and blue
 - e. a place where people put waste
 - f. a situation where water covers the land

6 Grammar focus - keep + -ing

We use this when we mean that someone continues to do something, often something negative.

Look at this example from the text:

The Tuvalans keep spending their dollars.

Make more sentences using these key words:

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. the sea/rise | 4. the temperature/go up |
| 2. the Tuvalans/buy/cars | 5. the Tuvalans/spend/their money |
| 3. they/build/roads | 6. they/argue/about global warming |

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KEY

1 Internet domain names

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1. United Kingdom | 4. South Africa | 7. France |
| 2. Argentina | 5. Japan | 8. Germany |
| 3. Tuvalu | 6. China | |

2 Find the information

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. In the South Pacific | 4. tv | 7. 10 million |
| 2. 11,000 | 5. \$40 million | 8. 4 |
| 3. \$1,000 a year each | 6. 3 metres | |

3 Comprehension Check

1. d; 2. h; 3. a; 4. e; 5. b; 6. g; 7. c; 8. f

4 Vocabulary – adjectives

- | | | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1. tiny | 4. incredible | 7. rich |
| 2. huge | 5. active | 8. simple |
| 3. strange | 6. rare | |

5 Vocabulary – words and definitions

1. c; 2. f; 3. a; 4. e; 5. b; 6. d

6 Grammar focus

1. The sea keeps rising.
2. The Tuvalans keep buying cars.
3. They keep building roads.
4. The temperature keeps going up.
5. The Tuvalans keep spending their money.
6. They keep arguing about global warming.